

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PM-04

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01 PA-01 DODE-00 /058 W

-----220727Z 044361 /13

R 211320Z APR 77

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4469

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0328

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: RECENT EVENTS: REPORTS, RUMORS AND RIDDLES

REF: ASMARA 0320 (DTG 200625Z APR 77)

1. THIS WEEK ASMARA HAS BEEN SATURATED WITH RUMORS, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN PROVEN TRUE, AND SOME OF WHICH REFLECT THE CONTINUING ANXIETIES OF THE CITY'S RESIDENTS. A REPORT THAT AN EAF FIGHTER CRASHED IN THE EARLY EVENING OF APRIL 19 HAS BEEN CONFIRMED.

THE FIRE BRIGADE RESPONDED TO A CALL THAT THE AIRCRAFT WAS IN DISTRESS, BUT WHEN IT ARRIVED ON THE SCENE SEVERAL MILES SOUTH OF ASMARA AIRPORT, THE PLANE HAD CRASHED AND THE PILOT REPORTEDLY KILLED. LOCAL SOURCES CLAIM THAT THE AIRCRAFT WAS A JET FIGHTER

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WHICH HAD BEEN HIT BY INSURGENT GROUND FIRE WHILE ON A MISSION IN THE WESTERN LOWLANDS.

2. THE RUMORS ABOUT HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCHES HAVE SUBSIDED SOMEWHAT (REFTEL), BUT THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT SUCH SEARCHES MAY, IN FACT, BE PLANNED. OIC NAVCOMMUNIT CONTACTED THE SECOND DIVISION LIAISON OFFICER (LO) ON THE SUBJECT. THE LATTER DENIED

ANY KNOWLEDGE OF PLANS FOR SUCH SEARCHES, BUT ASSURED THE OIC THAT IN THE EVENT SUCH SEARCHES DID OCCUR, THE RESIDENCES OF KAGNEW PERSONNEL WOULD NOT BE BOTHERED. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LO PHRASED HIS DENIAL GAVE THE OIC THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THERE ARE PLANS FOR SUCH SEARCHES. WHEN PROBED IF MENGHISTU'S SPEECH OF APRIL 14 PRESAGED A NEW MORE HOSTILE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., THE LO RESPONDED IN UTMOST SINCERETY THAT THE EPMG COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES GRANTED IN THE 1953 AGREEMENT ON KAGNEW REMAIN INTACT. HE SAID THIS IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF EPMG GUARDS AT ALL KAGNEW PERSONNEL RESIDENCES. THE LO'S STATEMENT IS BORNE OUT BY THE ABSENCE OF ANY EVIDENCE IN ASMARA OF A DETERIORATION IN US-EPMG RELATIONS.

3. THERE HAS BEEN A SURGE IN THE RUMORS THAT UNREST AND DISSATISFACTION IS AGAIN PLAGUING THE SECOND DIVISION. THE REPORTED CAUSE IS THE FAILURE OF THE EPMG TO FULFILL THE PROMISES MADE IN ITS AGREEMENT WITH THE SECOND DIVISION TROOPS IN MID-MARCH. THE TWO COMPLAINTS VOICED MOST FREQUENTLY ARE PAY RAISES AND ROTATION TO OTHER AREAS OF ETHIOPIA. THE RUMORS OF RECURRING DISSIDENCE HAS SPARKED AN INCREASE IN HOARDING BY LOCAL RESIDENTS OF FUEL AND KEROSENE, AS WELL AS SOME STAPLES, IN ANTICIPATION THAT THE TROOPS WILL AGAIN BALK AT ESCORTING THE ASMARA-MASSAWA CONVOYS. WHILE THESE REPORTS REMAIN UNCONFIRMED, IT IS APPARENT THAT THERE ARE NO LONGER A NUMBER OF EPMG UNITS VYING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESCORT CONVOYS DESPITE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES. FOR A THREE DAY PERIOD WHILE AN ABORTIVE CONVOY FOR ADI UGRI WAS BEING ORGANIZED, THE MASSAWA CONVOY WAS HALTED AS THE SAME TROOPS WERE TO BE USED ON THAT RUN.

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4. RUMORS OF CUBAN ADVISORS OR TROOPS ARRIVING IN ASMARA ARE MAKING THE ROUNDS. THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE THAT EVEN ONE CUBAN HAS ARRIVED AS YET, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE REPORTED SEEING ONE, OR POSSIBLY TWO, MEN IN AN UNFAMILIAR UNIFORM WHO BY COMPLEXION AND PROMINENT BEARDS, HAVE THE SINISTER LOOK OF THE CUBAN ARCHTYPE. NO KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL CONTACTS BELIEVE THAT THE CUBANS WOULD DETAIL MORE THAN AN OCCASIONAL OBSERVER TO ERITREA.
WAUCHOPE

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
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